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PROMETHEUS, THE TECHNOLOGIST

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In the Academy in Athens, there was a shrine dedicated to Prometheus, the divine patron of the arts and sciences. Prometheus was not one of the Olympians, but he was greatly honoured, revered as the saviour of humanity, the god who actually took the side of humanity against the will and wrath of Zeus.

Long, long ago, when the world was very young, before there were any humans around to tell stories, the gods fought amongst themselves for power over the universe. The eventual winner of these battles was Zeus, the sky god, who set up his kingdom with his relatives on Mt. Olympus. From the top of Mt. Olympus, which to the Greeks was literally the top of the world, he ruled the sky. He left one of his brothers, Poseidon, to rule the sea, and another, Hades, to rule the underworld. The surface of the earth was to be ruled by them all.

The Titans, the old gods, the cosmic energies which Zeus had brought under control, were not annihilated.¹ Some of them resented his rule, and worked against him. One such was Prometheus.

Prometheus had good reason to resent Zeus. For one thing, he had fought at Zeus' side against the other Titans, and felt himself to be inadequately rewarded. He was not in a position to challenge Zeus directly, but he found a number of ways to annoy him. One thing he did to annoy Zeus was to create human beings. At least he created males—female human beings were still to be thought of. He crafted men out of clay and persuaded the goddess Athena to breathe a living soul into them. Zeus did not like men at all, and made life very hard for them. He demanded constant sacrifices, which were a heavy burden for creatures who had a great deal of difficulty finding enough food to feed themselves. Prometheus came to their assistance, tricking Zeus into choosing the fat and bones of sacrificed animals as the gods' portion, while the meat was left for men:

*But Zeus was angered in his heart and hid the means to life
because Prometheus with his crooked schemes had cheated him.
This is why Zeus devised sorrows and troubles for men.
He hid fire. But Prometheus, noble son of Iapetos,
stole it back for man from Zeus, whose counsels are many.*²

Zeus wanted men to perish in the cold and dark. To live like men, and not in caves like animals, they must have fire. Prometheus had to rescue them again. He stole fire from the gods—the fire of Hephaistos, the blacksmith-god—and brought it down to earth in a fennel stalk. With this gift of light and heat he brought men technology, freeing them from the pain and frustration of groping around in the cold and dark, teaching them the crafts which would enable them to gain control over their world instead of being always at the whim of the gods. For this men have been grateful ever since.

This was not the end of the story. Zeus soon found a pretext for destroying the human race and the evils they brought. He created a great flood to wipe them out altogether. Once again, Prometheus was too clever for him, and saved a human couple. Pyrrha and Deucalion survived the flood in a boat and then set out to repopulate the earth, building a new civilisation with the skills and tools Prometheus had given them.

There is another side to this story. When Prometheus gave men technology he took away their knowledge of the future. He gave them the means of production and the skills to use them, but not the sense to use them wisely. Zeus, the tyrant, saw human beings as a threat to the order he had imposed on the universe and did not appreciate the way Prometheus championed them. When he looked down from Olympus and saw all those tiny specks of light glowing in the darkness he decided that Prometheus must be severely punished:

*With shackles and inescapable fetters Zeus riveted Prometheus
on a pillar—Prometheus of the labyrinthine mind;
and he sent a long-winged eagle to swoop on him
and devour the god's liver; but what the long-winged bird ate
in the course of each day grew back and was restored to its full size.³*

Zeus believed that no good could come of giving such freedom and power to such irresponsible creatures. They would in the end ruin everything—for the gods as well as for themselves.

Prometheus did not remain chained to his rock forever. He had secret information which Zeus needed to maintain his power, so there was room for negotiation. After a few aeons of torture Prometheus was freed by Herakles, a human descendent of Zeus, and allowed to join the gods on Olympus.

The image of Prometheus has been enormously significant in European consciousness. He is the creative mind. He is the god who took humanity's side. He is the hero who defied the patriarchy in the name of individual freedom, who brought light into our darkness. He is the saviour who sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, the benefactor who brought the gift of technology down from heaven, the teacher who showed us that we are not at the whim of the gods any more, who showed us how to use our intelligence to take control of the world. He is the individual who proclaims his and our right to be an individual. He is the suffering god who bears in himself the sufferings of the world. Poets, dramatists and visual artists have celebrated him as saviour and teacher.

The myth of Prometheus is a specifically masculine myth. It represents a peculiarly masculine view of what is of value in human experience. Older mythologies had celebrated the Great Goddess as the generator of all life. The story of Prometheus emerged in Greece as a patriarchal culture was consolidating its domination over an older matriarchal one. There is no notion of a creator-goddess here. It is the patriarchal Zeus who is clearly in charge of the universe, and the very male Prometheus who undertakes the creation of man. His way of going about the job is the "masculine" way of technology, not the "feminine" way of vegetative generation. His defiance of the patriarchy is in the "masculine" mode of the autonomous hero. The only goddess who has any part in the project is Athena, a goddess who is quite comfortable with the patriarchy, whom Prometheus himself delivered from the brow of Zeus with a blow of his axe. When woman enters the mythical narrative it is against the resistance of Prometheus.

When the gods see what men are up to under the patronage of Prometheus, they decide that something must be done to stop them, or at least to slow them down. So they create woman, to distract men from their purpose of taking over the earth. The first woman, Pandora, is crafted by Hephaistos and endowed by the gods with all their gifts:

*Once he had finished—not something good but a mixture of good
and bad—he took the maiden before gods and men,
and she delighted in the finery given her by grey-eyed Athena,
daughter of a mighty father. Immortal gods and mortal men
were amazed when they saw this tempting snare
from which men cannot escape. From her comes the fair sex;
yes, wicked womenfolk are her descendants.⁴*

Since Prometheus will have nothing to do with her, she is given as wife to Epimetheus, his brother.⁵ The story of Pandora's box, or jar, and the evils she set free to roam the earth, is well known. This story has conventionally been interpreted as an expression of the misogyny of the classical Greeks, and for centuries it has been read (and approved) as an attack on women. European intellectual culture, especially in the past four hundred years, has largely been played out within the myth of Prometheus. Within this fantasy, man's great work is to bring the light of science and the fire of technology to the darkness and cold of primitive ignorance. Within this fantasy, woman is at best trivialised as a distraction from man's great project and at worst depicted as the enemy of progress and the source of all the evils of the world.⁶

The appeal of Prometheus has been to the predominantly masculine consciousness of public culture during the past couple of thousand years of European history. However, when we stand at the end of the twentieth century and look back on the destruction of the planet wrought by men and their technology, we may take a different attitude and see a truth in the myth which was not obvious to earlier generations. For hundreds of years it has been commonly assumed that Nature and Culture are in necessary opposition. The development of modern science (almost entirely the work of men) has been shaped by the unconsidered assumption that one day Man will understand exactly how the universe works, and through this understanding will be able to control it, and that the role of women in all this is a very marginal one. The fantasy of living in harmony with the earth, cradled and nourished by the Great Mother, was observed to be a fantasy of "primitive" cultures, if, indeed, it was observed at all. Whether or not we adopt "the Gaia hypothesis"⁷ or other mythologies which celebrate the return of the Great Goddess, there seems to be an increased readiness to concede that aggressive technology may have run into a dead end, and to abandon the idea that solutions to the social and environmental problems generated by technology will inevitably be found in improved technology. Advanced technological societies seem to be gradually, and reluctantly, giving up the fantasy of exalting every valley, making plain every mountain and hill, clearing every forest and turning every creek into a barrel-drain.

Perhaps Prometheus has already controlled our consciousness for too long, and the damage is now irreversible. Be this as it may, the myth suggests that the Promethean project is inhibited by the need to coexist with a feminine consciousness. Pandora may not have been able to save us, but she has at least slowed down the destruction.

The myth of Prometheus emerged at a time when human beings in Greece and elsewhere were developing the capacity to think in a rational and abstract way, shifting from what Gebser⁸ calls a mythical structure of consciousness to a mental one. They were discovering that it was possible to think about the world in a secular rather than a religious way. One aspect of this shift was the emergence of people's sense of themselves as individuals, rather than only as members of a group. This is reflected in the myth, as Prometheus alienates himself from the ancient matriarchal consciousness as well as the more contemporary patriarchal one. On the one hand, he illuminates the darkness and rejects a union with Pandora, on the other, he hangs nailed to a cliff in steadfast isolation, refusing to submit to Zeus.⁹

The emergence in the Greeks of the ability to think abstractly did not mean that they ceased to think mythically.¹⁰ Neither did those who inherited their culture. We still think mythically, representing our truths in image and narrative, though we do not always recognise what we are doing. The story of Prometheus, which first found written form in the 8th century B.C. has been told and retold in the centuries since to express men's sense of triumph in emerging from the darkness, standing heroically alone in defiance of the old gods, and developing the means to control the natural world. Each age finds its own way of telling the story, emphasising one aspect rather than another, but the image is rich enough to contain them all.

The past two hundred years in particular have been dominated by the image of Prometheus in a peculiarly powerful way. When we look at the dominant consciousness of European culture (wherever it is found) over the past two hundred years we might reasonably suggest that the culture has been overtaken by a Promethean inflation.¹¹ Prometheus, like every other god, has his own peculiar truths, his own peculiar unquestioned assumptions about what it means to be human and about how we can best live on this planet. It has been the truths of Prometheus, rather than those of any other god, which have been accepted unquestioningly by those who have dominated the thinking and doing of “advanced” nations in the modern era.¹²

It can be argued that the thought and action of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century have been dominated by three images—the image of emancipation, the image of the machine, and the image of progress—images which belong to the myth of Prometheus. We can even suggest a specific date to mark the beginning of this peculiar modern consciousness. The year 1789 saw both the French Revolution and the beginning of the industrial era with the invention of the steam engine by James Watt. The old order was effectively defied politically, intellectually, and industrially. Men were suddenly declared free from the oppression of the patriarchy, the darkness of superstition and the limitations of human strength, and were given a promise of freedom in a future paradise on earth.

The Promethean fantasies of emancipation, machinery and progress have shaped the thinking of people who thought that they were disagreeing profoundly with each other. Christian theologians, Marxists, capitalists, humanists and rationalists, romantics and psychoanalysts, have all had different fantasies of what it is that people should to be emancipated from. The Christians wanted to free us from sin; the Marxists wanted to free us from oppression and exploitation; the capitalists said they could free us from poverty; the rationalists and secularists aimed to free us from Christianity and superstition; the romantics wanted to set us free from the intellectual and emotional inhibitions of the dominant culture; the emancipationists want to see an end to slavery; the popular educationists wanted to free the masses from ignorance and empower them by teaching them to read and write; the psychoanalysts would free us from the power of our unconscious drives. They have all had very different notions of how emancipation might be achieved, but they have all been driven by a fantasy of an eventual state of freedom. The myth of Prometheus, with its images of autonomy, heroic defiance of the patriarchy, liberation from ignorance and darkness, technology, salvation, seems to be manifested in ideologies which seem at first glance to be inexorably opposed to each other. The Promethean images seem to be equally present in the Marxist Engine of History, in Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of god, in the urgency of the European explorers’ drive to carry the light of imperial civilisation into darkest Africa and in missionary Christianity’s drive to save the souls of primitive people lost in darkness, in the mechanistic fantasy of technical medicine and behaviourist psychology, in Freud’s “hydraulic” theory of human nature, in modernist architecture’s building-as-machine and city-as-machine and in the countless human energy units which have gone into the building of capitalism’s brave new world.

The nineteenth century capitalist version of the Promethean myth, with its fantasy of achieving freedom from poverty through the development and management of technology, has proved remarkably resilient. Any one who wants to look can see how our obsession with technology has brought us to a point where we may have damaged the planet irreversibly and put the future of the species at considerable risk. Any one who wants to look can see that technology has proved at least as effective an instrument of enslavement as it has been an instrument of emancipation. Any one who cares to look can observe that belief in the inevitability of progress has little evidence to support it. Yet the fantasy survives. Now, in the middle of what may be the last dying spasm of the industrial age, political leaders are being exhorted to focus on the technology which will save us. Education is re-shaped and re-aligned so that its entire justification is that it will make students more technically skillful and thus potentially more productive. The primary purpose of education, we are told, is the skilling of our society. There has been a reorientation from low tech to high, but it is still technology which will make us free and rich and happy, and take us into the golden age. The Greeks of the

classical age may have seen in Prometheus the patron of the artist and scientist.¹³ In the past two hundred years he has undoubtedly become patron of the engineer.

When the Promethean fantasy takes over education we hear a great deal of talk about technology, as we might expect. We also hear talk about education as an instrument of social change, of emancipation. (The very notion of social engineering belongs to a Promethean fantasy.) But most of all we find ourselves immersed in a rhetoric of skilling and training. The rhetoric comes from people with a Promethean mission, people with an urge to defy the patriarchy and bring freedom to the masses. The truth of Prometheus is a very simple one: skilling brings empowerment for the individual and productivity for the society, and the simplest and most efficient and most technically sound way of teaching skills is through training. It is also the way most congenial for those who perceive human beings as machines. Those who oppose this focus on skilling and training, who suggest that there might be more to education than this, are fuddy-duddies who collude with the establishment to keep the people in chains.

In the Promethean mindset human beings are made in the image of the machine. Having worked out how the machine operates, we know all it is necessary to know about it. We can press the right buttons and get it producing efficiently. We can develop a teacher-proof curriculum, idiot-proof teaching methods. Once we have decided what is to be known we can devise step-by-step instruction manuals so that minimally trained teachers can produce the results we want. This is not as difficult as some might think, for we worshippers of Prometheus have no notion of an education which goes beyond the attainment of designated skills. No doubt there are people (conservatives on the one hand or hippies and subversives on the other) who would propose other ends for education—the discovery or construction of meaning, the appreciation of beauty, the development of intellectual abilities, passing on the culture of the tribe, personal fulfilment, encouraging a critical stance towards society—but no one can take such ideas seriously any more. Unless educational ends can be reduced to specific and demonstrable skills, and unless such skills are approved as contributing to the nation's progress towards the technological Utopia, they have no place in our scheme. Both curriculum and teaching (or rather, training) methods are designed in the image of the machine. Students become products and teachers become technicians.

We take machines for granted, and forget that the invention of the steam engine completely changed our relationship to the world. Before that invention, Prometheus' gift of fire had brought us the crafts of the smith and the potter, and his cunning had shown us the pulley, lever and inclined plane, but these technologies were on a human scale. The machine, however, does not have human limits, and does not necessarily remain under human control. Jean Gebser, in discussing the development of consciousness, argues that the shift from a culture of crafts to a culture of machinery has been a shift from an efficient mental consciousness to a deficient, narrowly rational one.¹⁴ The past two centuries have seen the machine permeate every aspect of European consciousness. The modern, Promethean mind has assumed that everything in our world must operate like a machine, including the mind itself. Biological, societal, economic, psychological systems have all been understood through their likeness to machines. The sophistication of the machine-image has developed somewhat over time, as machines themselves have become more sophisticated, but it is still the image of the machine which frames the questions and the conclusions.

In some fields, such as architecture, the image of the machine no longer has the power it had thirty years ago. In education, policy makers still cling to it, in spite of the unease and resistance of many practitioners. A couple of decades ago, they proposed that the reduction of education to the teaching of "behavioural objectives" was the short cut to Utopia. If human beings were simply machines, if society was simply a machine, this may well have been so. Unfortunately for the policy makers, human beings and society are more complex and less predictable than this, and behavioural objectives have largely dropped out of the language of education. Instead, we have something which pretends to be entirely new, called "competency-based training," fashioned in the same image, and with the same

disregard for what it is to be human. Children, adolescents and adults, fantasised as human machines with a capacity to acquire competencies, are trained (not educated, taught, or even instructed) in specific skills which will enable them to be slotted into specific places in an economic system which itself operates like a huge machine. Teaching itself becomes a question of having specific, trainable skills which enable one to train others. It has no meaning outside this. The content of education is reduced to what is measurable, assessable, instrumental. We must not forget that Prometheus has no understanding of or dealings with soul. Prometheus creates man as dead clay, and has to ask the goddess Athena to breathe soul into him. Modern Prometheans are even more fanatical than their master, for they think they can dispense with soul altogether. And with soul go the grace, flair, artistry and brilliance which distinguish the genius from the merely skillful.

The nineteenth century capitalists and imperialists happily referred to their time as the Age of Progress. It was clear to them that things were getting better all the time, or rather, that they, the masters of the world's destiny, were making things better. Darwinians and Marxists, in different ways, shared the same fantasy of inevitable progress.

The consciousness of the modern era, which Prometheus has dominated, has accepted this fantasy without question. Prometheus, as his name implies, always looks to the future, in contrast with his brother, Epimetheus, who looks to the past. Prometheus has no interest in the past, nor in the present, except as it affects the future. In education policy, as in economic or social policy, we are constantly asked by the social engineers to sacrifice present satisfaction for future gain.¹⁵ The notion of education being devoted to the satisfaction of students' immediate need for pleasure, beauty, companionship, experience, meaning, even understanding, is heresy to the worshippers of Prometheus. So, too, is the notion of education affirming and reinforcing the students' connection with the past, to the wisdom, traditions and rituals of their culture. For most of us, the Promethean images are so embedded in our way of apprehending the world that we tend to take the notion of progress (personal and societal) for granted. Actually it is a fairly recent construction. Ancient, mythical cultures looked back to a Golden Age, and sought to relive it through their rituals, finding the present rather an unsatisfactory condition by comparison. Even in the Renaissance, people looked to ancient times for wisdom; it was only gradually that they became aware that they could perhaps know things and do things which were beyond the ancients. Then an imagined future Utopia replaced a dimly recollected Paradise in their fantasies. Like Prometheus they set out to make things happen, rather than reflect, like Epimetheus, on what had gone before.

Approaching the end of the twentieth century we find education, as well as economics and political life, dominated by ideologies and theories which celebrate an aridly "rational" approach to making a better future happen. The archetypal pattern which the mythical consciousness of the ancient Greeks personified in Prometheus, is discernible at the mental level in political ideologies like economic rationalism and educational policies like competency-based training. Yet its very self-conscious rationality is grounded in our mythical consciousness, which still carries the ancient pattern of images, told and retold in the story of Prometheus. We can also discern the presence of this archetypal pattern in the constant search for the magic spell, the magic slogan and the magic ritual through which we can regain control of a machine which seems to be running out of control, if not disintegrating altogether. The Promethean inflation, which takes the form of an arrogant confidence in our own rationality, is firmly grounded in the primitive, pre-rational, pre-egoic sensations of the magical structure of consciousness, which seeks to control the world by magic.

It can readily be argued that the modern, Promethean era has ended, that we have entered a post-industrial, post-modern era with a different dynamic and a different sensibility, that the myth of progress has been abandoned in the face of the realities of recent history and present crisis. Yet educational policy in many industrialised and industrialising countries is still in the grip of the Promethean fantasy. Modern mythical thinking connects the images of the great liberator, technology, control, breaking with the past and masculine heroism in a narrative in which man's dedication to

gaining control of his destiny through an ever-improving technology, and the devotion of all his resources to this great project, takes him inevitably to a glorious future.

Aischylos, in *Prometheus Bound*,¹⁶ had to remind the fifth century Athenians—who had a strong tendency to be infatuated with their own cleverness—that the image of Prometheus represents the limits, as well as the promise, of being human. It is not Prometheus' achievement that he focuses on, but his punishment. Fire belongs to the gods. Prometheus' theft of it is a criminal act in which man is inevitably implicated. Yet the theft is itself inevitable, for without fire man is not man. The condition of being human is in itself a deficient one, lacking an element which does not belong to it but without which it cannot survive.¹⁷ Human beings are tragically compelled by their very nature to be in the wrong. Their very existence is an assault on the new order which Zeus has established—the rule of law. Prometheus' support for humanity is a threat to order. As Hephaistos says before reluctantly driving a stake through Prometheus' chest, as ordered by Zeus:

*A god yourself, you did not dread God's anger,
but gave to men honour in excess of justice.*¹⁸

Prometheus is punished for doing what he has to do. Human beings are punished for being what they have to be. They, like Prometheus, can cry out about the injustice of it all and, like Prometheus, they can refuse to submit, but neither their entreaties nor their defiance can change their status in a world ruled by Zeus. In Aischylos' tragedy, Okeanos¹⁹ and Hermes²⁰ suggest that Prometheus make peace with the patriarchal world order through absolute obedience, but Prometheus prefers to endure his sufferings and maintain his conviction that a new world order will one day replace that of Zeus.

Aischylos' suffering Prometheus seeks strength in his ancient connections with the feminine. In his extremity he forgets the joys of independence and reconnects with his origins. As he is nailed to the rock he calls on Mother Earth to witness what he endures. He is visited and comforted by the sea nymphs, the daughters of Okeanos. He finds common cause with Io, who come across his rock in her desperate flight, a symbol of the oppressed feminine, violated and unremittently persecuted by the patriarchy.²¹ His hopes for the future are hopes he shares with her. He attributes his mysterious knowledge to Themis, his mother, and identifies her with Earth:

*Earth whose form is one, whose name is many.*²²

In the play's last scene, as Prometheus is hurled by Zeus' thunderbolt into Tartarus, rock, chains and all, he cries out once more to Earth and the other ancient elemental gods to witness:

*O holy Mother Earth, O Air and Sun,
Behold me, I am wronged.*²³

Prometheus' links to the old, pre-Olympian order, and his hints at the possibility of a future order which is entirely different, undercuts the notion that the patriarchy established by Zeus represents the way things are meant to be forever. Yet, for Aischylos, the rule of Zeus indisputably represents the way things are in his own age, and Prometheus must, paradoxically, both resist and accept it. He must resist it, because that is how he is true to himself. Yet, at the same time, he must acknowledge the limitations of existence in this world, the irresolvable tension between freedom and order, and opt for order. Before he is freed and able to join the gods he must be humbled by suffering. Yet that is not enough. He must be liberated and redeemed: liberated by the hero, Herakles, who shoots the eagle which gorges itself each day of the Titan's liver; redeemed by Chiron, the centaur, who offers to die in his place.²⁴ Prometheus warns Zeus not to marry Thetis, with whom he is infatuated, for the son she will have by him will overthrow him. Zeus gratefully releases Prometheus from his chains, but enjoins him always to wear an iron ring to remind him of his captivity.²⁵ Prometheus joins the immortal gods and Zeus, a somewhat less savage god than he was at the beginning of the story, continues his rule.

Aischylos had good enough reason to warn his fellow citizens about the arrogance to which a Promethean consciousness is prone. Societies captivated by their own ingenuity are inclined to overlook some of the essentials of human existence. They can be blind even to the consequences of their own cleverness. (There is an ironical touch to Prometheus' story, as his successive interventions to help humanity actually got humanity further into trouble and necessitated further intervention to rescue them.)

They can be blind also to the evidence that too much of a good thing seems to lead into its opposite.²⁶ The Promethean obsession with autonomy leads simultaneously to a state of robotic servitude as individuals become elements of a vast machine, and to a condition of alienation and nausea as the horrors of existential loneliness hit home. The Promethean desire to empower the individual leads to new forms of slavery. The Promethean rebellion against an established and punitive authority leads in many cases to a new tyranny worse than the old. The Promethean worship of rationality leads to new forms of irrationality. A Promethean embracing of the machine as an extension of human skills seems to lead inevitably to de-skilling. The Promethean effort to bring light into the darkness has to be repeated over and over, as the light of criticism turns into the darkness of dogmatism. Like any other archetypal image, the image of Prometheus is negative as well as positive, pathological as well as healthy.²⁷

In the education context, the desire of policy makers and administrators to empower children through skilling turns them into industrial prisoners. Their desire to make schools more mechanically efficient providers of the product called education turns the students themselves into industrial products. The obsessive focus on skills training, to the neglect of the other possibilities of education, leads to alienation, apathy, ineffectuality and hours of meaningless "busy-work."²⁸ In an educational climate dominated by the image of Prometheus, effective teachers find their effectiveness depends on their Promethean resistance to Prometheus himself, for Prometheus has done a deal with the authorities.

The history of European thought is studded with Promethean characters who have brought light to the darkness, taught us to claim responsibility for our actions, enabled us to see the world scientifically. Some have been persecuted for their challenge to the given order and the given truths.²⁹ To them we can be grateful. At the same time we can reflect that there is something peculiarly masculine about the whole enterprise,³⁰ and that this suggests that it has been neglecting something absolutely essential about our nature and the nature of the world we live in. The myth as Aischylos tells it suggests that in his extremity Prometheus himself renews his contact with the feminine energy from which he emerged in the first place. There are some signs that our twentieth century living of this myth we are at last becoming aware of our pain, nailed helpless at the very edge of the universe, isolated from nature, from order, from contact with our beginnings, and that our pain may be driving us at last to attempt a reconciliation not only with the abstract order of Zeus but, perhaps more significantly, with the natural, rhythmical order of Gaia and Themis.

NOTES

1. The Greeks of historical times were not the original inhabitants of the Greek peninsula, but had entered it in several waves in the second millennium B.C. bringing with them their own gods, the family of the Indo-European sky-god, Za (Zeus). The fertility worship of the indigenous people was in some respects incorporated in their mythology and ritual. In other respects it was suppressed and supplanted. The Titans are depicted in the Greek myths as an earlier generation of gods, conquered by the Olympians after a ten-year battle. This appears to represent the victory of the new "civilised" gods of the Indo-European invaders over the ancient, earth-forces which were worshipped by the conquered peoples. Some of the Titans were condemned to endless imprisonment and torture in Tartarus, under the earth. Others, such as Helios (the sun), Mnemosyne (Memory), Ge (Earth) and Themis (Order) continued to play an important part in the Olympian cosmos.

2. Hesiod, *Works and Days* l. 47-51, in A. Athanassakis (ed.) *Hesiod: Theogony; Works and Days; Shield*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 68.

3. Hesiod, *Theogony* l. 521-525, in Athanassakis, *ibid.* p. 26.

4. *Ibid.* l. 585-592.

5. Epimetheus (Afterthought) is contrasted with the crafty Prometheus (Forethought). He welcomes Pandora and her jar full of evils in spite of Prometheus' warning never to accept a gift from the gods.

Our source for the story of Prometheus, Epimetheus and Pandora is Hesiod (8th century B.C.) who does little to disguise his fear of women. It is likely that Pandora was originally a personification of the Great Goddess of the indigenous peoples, reduced by the dominant patriarchal culture to a minor character in the story of creation.

6. The biblical myth of creation and fall carries the same images: man is given the mission or task of subduing the earth; the first woman is shown to be responsible for the evils which humans must suffer. The emergence of this myth in the eighth century B.C. appears to mark, in Western Asia as well as in Greece, the victory of a patriarchal politics and a patriarchal consciousness over a matriarchal politics and consciousness.

Myths, it should be noted, are not about life as it ought to be, but life as it is.

7. Gaia, or Ge, is Earth, the grandmother of the Olympian gods. The Gaia hypothesis, developed by the biologist James Lovelock, sees the globe as a total organism of which humanity is a part. Through humanity the earth awakens to self-conscious intelligence. See James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look At Life On Earth*, Oxford University Press, 1979.

8. Jean Gebser, *The Ever Present Origin* (trans. Noel Barstad), Ohio University Press, 1984.

9. It is common in Greek myths, especially in their later re-workings, to associate feminine power with darkness. Feminine power is located in a dimly recollected past, before the light of a rational consciousness gave man the ability to separate himself from nature. In examining myths in any culture which has undergone political change, it is necessary to distinguish between the elements which belong to the "primal" myth and those which have been changed or added to reflect (and legitimise) changed political and social conditions. There is some evidence that Prometheus was himself originally a god of darkness, perhaps a moon-god.

The emergence of a cult of Prometheus as a proactive, egoic hero who acts against the established world rather than in harmony with it is not surprising in a period (8th-6th centuries B.C.) characterised by a shift from the rule of kings, who inherited power, to that of tyrants, who seized it, and characterised also by a growing tendency in the citizens of the city-states to see themselves as individuals with rights, who are willing and able to resist arbitrary power.

10. "We must first of all remain cognisant that these structures are not merely past, but are in fact still present in more or less latent and acute form in each one of us." Jean Gebser, *ibid.* p. 42.

11. Carl Jung developed the notion of psychological inflation to account for the way in which an individual can be "taken over" by a particular energy so completely that it shapes all his or her thinking and feeling and acting. The experience of obsessively falling in love is an obvious enough example. The mothering inflation which sometimes takes over a woman's consciousness after the birth of a child, so that all of life's meaning is found in her mothering bond with her child, is another. The

strutting, macho, male “hero” shows us another. The same notion can readily be applied to a group or national consciousness. When nations go enthusiastically to war we can reasonably talk of an archetypal inflation which has been traditionally personified in Ares (or Mars) the Greco-Roman god of war. Jung himself saw the phenomenon of Nazism in Germany as an inflation of the national consciousness by the archetypal energy of Wotan, the Germanic god of impulse and blood-lust.

12. This is not to suggest that there have not been significant intellectual and social movements in opposition to the dominant sensibility. Nineteenth century romanticism is an obvious example. However, such movements have not successfully challenged the dominant assumptions and, often enough, have actually incorporated them.

13. It is interesting to note that, unlike ourselves, the classical Greeks made no distinction between art and skill. The word “techne” served for both.

14. Gebser, *ibid.* p. 95.

15. It was Freud who first suggested that it is its preference for deferred rather than present gratification that gives the middle class its strength. Prometheus stays nailed to his rock for thirty thousand years of myth-time, until he can gain release on favourable terms.

16. Aischylos wrote at least four plays about Prometheus, of which *Prometheus Bound* is the only one to have survived in full.

17. Carl Kerenyi develops the idea of the existential Prometheus, the symbol of the suffering intrinsic to human existence:

The darkness of Prometheus signifies precisely the deficiency of one who needs fire in order to achieve a more perfect form of being. In obtaining this higher form of being for man, Prometheus shows himself to be man's double, an imperfect image of man's basically imperfect form of being. C. Kerenyi, *Prometheus* (trans. R. Manheim), Pantheon Books, 1963.

18. Aischylos, *Prometheus Bound*, in *Three Greek Plays*, (trans. Edith Hamilton) W. W. Norton & Co. 1937, l. 29-30. “Justice” (Dike) is the order fixed by Zeus for gods and men. From Prometheus’ point of view, the basis of his punishment is obvious:

The reason is that I loved men too well. 18. *Ibid.* l. 123.

19. Okeanos is also a Titan, a kinsman of Prometheus. He is the personification of the great river which encircles the world and, according to Homer, is actually the oldest of the gods. The daughters of Okeanos, the sea nymphs, appear as the chorus in *Prometheus Bound*, attempting to comfort him in his suffering.

20. Hermes arrives as Zeus’ messenger, warning of further punishments if Prometheus does not reveal the secret told him by his mother Themis (Law), of what Zeus must do if he is not to be overthrown by one of his offspring. The myths of Prometheus and Hermes contain a number of parallel elements. Both have a connection with fire: Prometheus steals it, Hermes invents it. Both are credited with the first slaying of cattle for food. Both invent religious sacrifice: Prometheus to deceive the gods, Hermes to honour them. Both are notorious for their cunning. However, while the myth of Prometheus gives a central place to his connection with men, they are very marginal to the myth of Hermes. Hermes has no interest in an heroic defiance of the patriarchy. He is scornful of Prometheus’ high principles:

*Better, no doubt to be chained to a rock
Than be the Father's trusted herald.* *Ibid.* l. 968-969.

21. Io was pursued and raped By Zeus, who then turned her into a heifer in order to deceive his wife Hera. Hera, however, was not fooled, and tormented Io by means of a gadfly which she vainly tried to escape. In her travels she came to where Prometheus was chained and he prophesied the eventual overthrow of Zeus' absolute power, and his own liberation by Herakles, one of her descendants.

22. Aischylos, *ibid* l. 211. Themis was an early earth goddess, often identified with Ge. She was the second wife of Zeus, by whom she had several children, including Eunomia (Order), Dike (Justice) and Eirene (Peace). She came to represent natural order, the predictability of the seasons and other natural cycles, as well as human order achieved through consensus. She was the mother of Prometheus by her brother, the Titan Iapetos. It was from her that Prometheus got his knowledge of the future. It was her voice which spoke through the oracle of Delphi before Apollo made it his domain.

23. *Ibid.* l. 1091-93.

24. Chiron is the nearest equivalent in Greek mythology to a saint. As a centaur (half man and half horse) he is both human and animal. As a son of Kronos, he is one of the immortals, as venerable as Zeus himself. He is a teacher and healer for both gods and humans. He suffers from an agonising wound, inflicted accidentally by his protégé, Herakles, yet he is able to heal others. Although immortal he is able to die in the place of Prometheus, as a way of ending his own sufferings.

The myth of Prometheus, the saviour of mankind from a punitive Father, endured into the Christian era as the image was attached to Christ in some of the fiercer Christian theologies. The image of Christ as the wounded healer has also endured in Christian theology.

25. The iron ring remained a symbol of Prometheus in Greek ritual. We might note that the mythical structure of consciousness belongs to the bronze age and that the development of the mental structure in Greece is roughly contemporaneous with the beginning of the iron age.

26. Jung borrowed from the seventh century B.C. Greek philosopher Heraclitus the word "enantiadromia," to label a phenomenon which he frequently came across in his clinical work—the tendency of things to turn into their opposites. For Jung, it was a matter of observation that love often turns into hate, freedom into slavery, hope into despair (and vice versa), not so much through the action of outside forces as through something in their own dynamics. Jung theorised about the Shadow, that part of us which we disown and deny whenever we identify too wholeheartedly with a particular state of being. This unconscious Shadow demands expression and may, on occasion, overwhelm our consciousness and behaviour.

27. The archetypal images are bipolar. In the imaginal world, love is not a different sort of thing than hate, but the opposite face of it. Both attraction and revulsion belong to Eros. Both freedom and imprisonment belong to Prometheus. Gebser sees the experience of bipolarity as an essential feature of the mythical structure of consciousness, being displaced in the mental structure by the experience of duality. In my mental-rational consciousness I either love you or hate you. In my mythical-imaginal consciousness I do both simultaneously, just as I am both free and captive simultaneously.

28. For Gebser, one of the essential characteristics of the deficient mental structure is the fixity of its perspective:

Perspective fixes the observer as well as the observed; it fixes man on the one hand and the world on the other. Compelled to emphasise his ego ever more strongly because of the isolating fixity, man faces the world in hostile confrontation.

He goes on to list the consequences of this perspectivisation of the world in the isolation and mass-phenomena of his day (c. 1948):

. . . isolation of individuals, of entire nations and continents; isolation in the physical realm in the form of tuberculosis; in the political in the form of ideological or monopolistic dictatorship; in everyday activity in the form of "busy" activity devoid of any sense-direction or relationship to the world as a whole . . . Ibid. pp. 94-95.

29. We might argue that the significance of the image of Galileo in the mythology of science can be attributed to its Promethean resonance. Bertolt Brecht, in *The Life of Galileo*, shows him involved in the Promethean struggle against the dogmas of the patriarchy, but also blames him for the subsequent subservience of science to political power:

As things are, the best that can be hoped for is a race of inventive dwarfs who can be hired for any purpose. (trans. John Willett) Methuen, 1986. p. 109.

30. It has frequently been pointed out that the most significant shapers of European ways of understanding the world have been not only male but also, in the majority of cases, either celibate or impotent.